

New Hampshire  
*Department of Agriculture,  
Markets & Food*

*Granite State Home & Garden*  
**Immediate Release**

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**Price Verification Information for Consumers**

by  
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From beans to jeans and headgear to hardware, most everyday items bear a Universal Product Code (UPC). This symbol is a series of numbers and vertical bars of varying thicknesses and is shorthand for product information. When a cashier passes this UPC symbol over an electronic scanner, a computer identifies the symbol and sends a pre-programmed price to the check-out register. That price appears on a display screen.

Scanner technology has several advantages: speeding check-out time, lowering labor costs, and improving sales and inventory records. Scanning results in fewer pricing errors than manual entry and using individual price stickers. Studies show that scanning errors can result in both overcharges and undercharges. Overcharges, however, cost the individual shopper money, especially if the shopper doesn't watch prices at the register during checkout and fails to speak up when they occur. Savvy consumers are those who are aware of prices and who routinely watch and check the scanner charges for the items they buy. They are willing to complain about errors, shop elsewhere if price corrections are not promptly made, and encourage retail stores to police the accuracy of their check-out scanners.

Effective Complaining/Laws and State Enforcement

Promising one price and charging a higher price is against the law. If you are overcharged in a particular store, tell the clerk or talk to the customer service representative or store manager about it. If errors occur frequently, write to the company's headquarters. The retailer may not realize a problem exists until it is formally pointed out. You should report repetitive overcharges to your state weights and measures office. They have responsibility of oversight of the law. If you have a problem with a weights or measures issue, talk with the store manager or owner. If the manager can't or won't resolve the problem or answer questions to your satisfaction, contact your state weights and measures office. They will investigate your complaint: Division of Weights and Measures, NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food, PO Box 2042, Concord, NH 03302-2042, Telephone: (603) 271-3700, Email: rcote@agr.state.nh.us.